

Reverse Outlining

By reverse outlining, you can enhance the flow, organization, and clarity of your paper.

Once a draft is written...

1. On a separate sheet of paper, write a sentence summarizing each paragraph.
2. If you have difficulty coming up with a summary statement, consider revising the paragraph. Perhaps you have too many ideas present in that paragraph. You may need to delete material or divide the paragraph into smaller ones.
3. Ask yourself if the first sentence of each paragraph is similar to your summary statement. If not, consider revising. Readers should be able to read the beginning of each paragraph and know where they are headed.
4. Look at the sheet with all of the summary statements. Does each statement play a role in supporting your thesis? If not, consider revising or deleting paragraphs in your paper so that they contribute to your argument. You may also want to consider revising your thesis.
5. While studying the sheet with the summary statements, ask yourself if your paper is organized in the best way. For example, do you mention an idea in one paragraph only to come back to that same idea several paragraphs later? Perhaps the two paragraphs should be moved closer together.